

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 03150 092217Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----019118 092221Z /62
O 092216Z AUG 78 ZFF-4
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2821

S E C R E T USUN NEW YORK 03150

NODIS

DEPARTMENT PASS AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE, AMEMBASSY
DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE, AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE, AND
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MILI, XF, IS, LE
SUBJECT: UNIFIL/IDF MEETING ON SITUATION IN SOUTHERN
LEBANON

1. URQUHART PHONED LEONARD AUGUST 9 AT FIVE P.M. TO
PROVIDE HIM WITH ACCOUNT OF MEETING THIS MORNING BETWEEN
UNIFIL AND IDF ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.
PARTICIPANTS FOR UNIFIL WERE ERSKINE, CUQ, AND AIME; ON
ISRAELI SIDE EITAN AND BEN GAL. URQUHART WAS QUITE
AGITATED AND CHARACTERIZED THIS DISCUSSION AS THE WORST
YET WITH THE IDF, SETTING BACK CURRENT EFFORTS TO PLACE
LAF BATTALION AT TIBNIN AND MAKING IT CLEAR TO HIM THAT
IDF WAS SABOTAGING EFFORTS OF UNIFIL AND GOL TO TRY TO
STABILIZE THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

2. READING FROM THE CABLE HE HAD RECEIVED FROM ERSKINE,
URQUHART DESCRIBED OPENING PRESENTATION BY UNIFIL
EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF GETTING LAF BATTALION TO
TIBNIN, IN ORDER TO HELP RESTORE AUTHORITY OF GOL THROUGH-
OUT LEBANON. ALSO STRESSED HIGH IMPORTANCE OF ISRAELIS

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GETTING CHRISTIAN MILITIA TO STOP SHOOTING ON UNIFIL AND
LAF.

3. EITAN REPLIED THAT IT WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR THE
LEBANESE BATTALION TO PASS THROUGH CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE
ENROUTE TO TIBNIN. THE IDF COULD NOT GUARANTEE THE
BEHAVIOR OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA, WHICH WOULD REGARD

THE TRANSIT OF THE BATTALION AS PROVOCATIVE. EITAN CHARACTERIZED THE COMPOSITION OF THE BATTALION AS PRE-DOMINATELY MUSLIM (URQUHART SAID THIS WAS NOT THE CASE) AND ALSO REFERRED TO RECENT MARONITE/MUSLIM INCIDENTS IN THE NORTH AS REASONS WHY MILITIA WOULD CHALLENGE LAF TRANSIT.

4. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, EITAN THEN SAID THAT IT WAS NO USE TALKING ABOUT LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY SINCE LEBANON HAS ALREADY CEASED TO EXIST. THE IDF, HE SAID, WOULD NOT HESITATE IN CHOOSING BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND THE LEBANESE ARMY. IN CONCLUSION, EITAN SAID THE SYMBOLIC PRESENCE OF AN LAF BATTALION AT TIBNIN MIGHT HELP, PROVIDED IT GOT THERE THROUGH SOME OTHER ROUTE. BUT THE IDF COULD NOT HELP TO ASSURE THIS OUTCOME NOR ASSURE THEIR SAFETY IF THEY GOT THERE. EITAN SAID CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THERE IS A "HOLY WAR" UNDER WAY IN LEBANON BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS AND ISRAELIS CANNOT DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS ADAMANT ATTITUDE.

5. URQUHART SAID THAT ERSKINE WILL PROVIDE AN ACCOUNT OF THIS MEETING TO AHOURY IN BEIRUT ON AUGUST 10. HE CONTEMPLATED, BUT THEN REJECTED, IDEA OF ASKING ERSKINE TO WATER-DOWN HIS PRESENTATION TO KHOURY. ALSO DECIDED THERE WAS NO USE IN SPEAKING TO ACTING ISRAELI UN DEP PERM REP.

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6. URQUHART AND WE BELIEVE IT IS LIKELY THAT ONCE GOL RECEIVES THIS ACCOUNT, IT WILL COME TO CONCLUSION THAT ISRAELIS ARE DETERMINED TO FORCE THE BATTALION TO RETURN NORTH. THIS CLEARLY WOULD BE A GRAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL SET-BACK FOR SARKIS. WE BELIEVE IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT GOL MAY ASK FOR URGENT MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL WHICH WOULD THEN BE HEAVILY ANTI-ISRAELI IN ITS FOCUS. TUENI INDICATED IN CONVERSATION WITH LEONARD YESTERDAY THAT BOUTROS HAS BEEN CONSIDERING SERIOUSLY THE POSSIBILITY OF CALLING FOR A SC MEETING RATHER THAN LOOKING ON IT AS A USEFUL THREAT WHICH COULD ACHIEVE NOTHING IF ACTUALLY CARRIED OUT. YOUNG

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, MEETING REPORTS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES, POLITICAL SITUATION, MEETINGS, COMBAT OPERATIONS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978USUNN03150
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840156-2701
Format: TEL
From: USUN NEW YORK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780880/aaaacpfg.tel
Line Count: 106
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c0cfea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1786710
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNIFIL/IDF MEETING ON SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON
TAGS: MARR, MILI, XF, IS, LE, UNIFIL, IDF
To: STATE SS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c0cfea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014